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Viewing cable 09MANAGUA507, LIBERTAD ACT: NICARAGUAN RELATIONS WITH CUBA

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09MANAGUA507**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09MANAGUA507	2009-05-20 16:40	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Managua

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758456.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758467.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758468.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758464.aspx>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4103/la-embusa-y-el-gabinete-de-ortega>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4104/d-rsquo-escoto-en-onu-ldquo-un-desafio-de-ortega-a-ee-uu-rdquo>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4102/estrada-y-la-ldquo-doble-cara-rdquo-ante-ee-uu>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3966/la-ldquo-injerencia-rdquo-de-ee-uu-en-el-2006>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2758764.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/NotaPrincipal/Mundo2758753.aspx>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4041/millones-de-dolares-sin-control-y-a-discrecion>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4040/la-ldquo-injerencia-rdquo-de-venezuela-en-2006>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4047/rodrigo-barreto-enviado-de-ldquo-vacaciones-rdquo>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2757239.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/NotaPrincipal/Mundo2746658.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2757244.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2746673.aspx>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3991/dra-yadira-centeno-desmiente-cable-diplomatico-eeuu>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3968/pellas-pronostico-a-eeuu-victoria-de-ortega-en-2006>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3967/barreto-era-ldquo-fuente-confiable-rdquo-para-eeuu>

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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4152
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP WASHDC
RUMIAAA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAGUA 000507

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/20/2029

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SUBJECT: LIBERTAD ACT: NICARAGUAN RELATIONS WITH CUBA

REF: SECSTATE 48487

Classified By: Ambassador Robert J. Callahan for reasons 1.4b and d.

Summary

1. (C) Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega's association with the Cuban regime spans several decades. Since Ortega returned to power in January 2007, Nicaragua has re-established close relations with Cuba, especially through common membership in the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA). Ortega frequently lauds the Cuban socialist model in his public speeches. He has called for an end of the U.S. economic sanctions against Cuba. While trade between the two countries is limited, Cuba sponsors important training and exchange programs in health and education. End summary.

Cuba, Nicaragua, and the Revolutionary Brotherhood

2. (C) Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega's association with the Cuban regime spans several decades. Upon release from prison, Ortega spent several months in exile in Cuba during the 1970s. When the FSLN rose to power, Ortega looked to Cuban-style socialism for direction. Throughout the 1980s, the two countries enjoyed close economic, political, and military cooperation. After losing the 1990 elections, Ortega would travel to Cuba frequently and he has maintained close relationships with senior Cuban officials, including Fidel Castro.

3. (C) Reflecting ideological and historical affinities with the Cuban regime, Ortega moved immediately after taking office in January 2007 to join Cuba, Venezuela, and Bolivia as the fourth member of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA). In a televised speech on September 20, 2008, in Managua, Nicaragua, Ortega favorably remarked that "Cuba is without question an extraordinary example of a socialist project in the Latin American and Caribbean context." In protest over the exclusion of Cuba from the April 17-19 Summit of the Americas, Ortega joined other ALBA members Bolivia and Venezuela in refusing to sign the draft declaration.

4. (C) Through ALBA, President Ortega maintains regular contact with high-level Cuban officials. According to open source reporting, Ortega met with a number of senior Cuban officials during the last several months:

--On April 21, 2009, in Havana, Cuba, Ortega met with Fidel Castro. Ortega also participated in a series of media events and received medical treatment while there.

--On April 16, 2009, at an ALBA summit in Cumana, Venezuela, Ortega met with Raul Castro. There, Ortega called U.S. sanctions against Cuba "a true genocide against the people of Cuba," and he called for their removal.

--On April 1, 2009, in Havana, Cuba, Ortega and First Lady Rosario Murillo met with First Vice President of the Cuban Council of State Jose Ramon Machado Ventura and Minister of Foreign Relations Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla.

--On November 26, 2008, in Caracas, Venezuela, Ortega participated in an ALBA summit with Ricardo Cabrisas, Vice President of the Cuban Council of Ministers. There, he likened Nicaragua's battles against European and "Yankee" interventionism to Cuba's struggle against the U.S. trade embargo and international isolation since its revolution.

15. (C) Nicaraguan Ambassador to Cuba Luis Cabrera, Argentine by birth but a close confidant of President Ortega, coordinates the bilateral relationship at a working level. Cabrera is the point of contact for President Ortega with the FARC, according to documents seized by Colombian Armed Forces from the FARC in 2008, published by the media.

Trade and Investment

16. (U) Nicaraguan-Cuban bilateral trade declined steadily

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from 1991 to 2005 but has increased since 2007. Nicaraguan exports to Cuba in 2008 totaled \$2.1 million, up from \$700,000 in 2007. Nicaraguan imports from Cuba were \$1.6 million in 2008, down from \$6.3 million in 2007 that included the importation of a large quantity of energy-efficient light bulbs. Nonetheless, two-way trade remains insignificant, representing 0.1% percent of Nicaragua's total trade worldwide. Nicaragua's investment promotion agency, ProNicaragua, reports no significant Cuban investment in Nicaragua.

Training and Scholarships

17. (C) As a legacy of FSLN rule during the 1980s, Cuba and Nicaragua have historically collaborated on health and education programs. Since Ortega took office in January 2007, this collaboration has intensified:

--Nicaraguan Minister of Health Guillermo Gonzalez reported that as of July 2008 there were 250 Cuban medical personnel working throughout Nicaragua -- up from 140 just six months before -- with the largest concentration along the Atlantic coast. More recent estimates of the number of Cuban medical personnel in Nicaragua are unavailable.

--Through "Operation Miracle," Nicaraguan Government officials claimed in May 2009 that Cuban doctors, with Venezuelan funding, have performed cataract surgery for more than 50,000 Nicaraguans since January 2007.

--Under a long-standing agreement, any member of the Nicaraguan military can receive free medical treatment in Havana, though in practice most are served by local military hospitals and seek specialized care in the United States.

--According to Embassy contacts, Cuba is supporting Nicaraguan intelligence gathering, with training and personnel, against Nicaraguan and U.S.-based democracy activists.

--For years, Cuba has offered full scholarships to Nicaraguan students to attend Cuban universities. According to May 2009 press reports, as many as 900 Nicaraguan students are

currently studying in Cuba, 700 of them medicine.

--Cuban teachers participate in a Cuban-designed rural literacy program in Nicaragua called "Yes, I Can."

Comment

[¶8.](#) (C) While President Ortega's ideological and historical affinity with the Cuban regime make the two natural allies, it is ALBA that provides the framework for the relationship and Venezuelan funding that facilitates programs at the operational level.

CALLAHAN